

Chapter 1: Empty Your Cup, Empty Your Mind

I rushed to hide in an alleyway as quickly as I could. I didn't want anyone to see the tears rolling down my face.

How could this happen?! I kicked the walls and punched the garbage cans. One of the lids snapped in half, but I didn't care. I just had my entire life pulled out from underneath me like an old rag. I did everything I was supposed to! How could they just let me go like that?

I lost strength and fell to my knees. I watched as a puddle of tears formed below. I never thought that's even possible. *What am I going to do?*

"Is everything okay?" - A strange voice behind me appeared out of nowhere.

I was startled and jumped up immediately - "Who are you?"

"I'm just making sure you're okay." - He said, while slowly stepping towards me.

"I'm fine, I just want to be alone, so please...leave me alone."

"It doesn't look like you're fine. What happened?" - Now he stood up tall and stared at me. He seemed determined.

All of a sudden, I could hear myself muttering - "I was..."

And then I stopped again - "Why do you care?! Why would I tell my life story to some random stranger."

"You're right." - He laughed. - "But you never know what some random stranger can do for you. What happened? I'll listen."

"I was fired." - The words just came out.

I don't know why I told him. Maybe it was the way he carried himself. He was confident and seemed to have genuine concern. Or maybe it was the fact that he was wearing a suit which looked as expensive as my entire wardrobe. For whatever reason, I felt like I could trust him.

"I have no way to support my mom anymore."

"Is there something wrong with your mom?"

"I'm worried about her health. She isn't saying anything, but something is happening, I know it. I've been working to help her... She's done so much for me. And now...now..." - I started tearing up again.

"And now you can't support her anymore." - He finished my sentence.

"Why am I telling you all this? I should be looking for a new job now, not talking to some random strangers."

To be honest, I didn't even know if I could find a new job. I was lucky enough to get the job I had. And I only got it because my mom knew someone at the company.

"Are you sure what you need right now is a job?"

What a stupid question that was! How else am I supposed to make money?

"If money is what you need to be able to support your mother, I can show you how to make money..." He paused for a moment, seeing suspicion on my face - "...and no, it's nothing illegal."

"Really? And how does that work?" - I raised one eyebrow and tilted my head to the side.

"I'll show you, but I'm actually starting to run late to a business meeting now." - He pulled out a piece of paper and noted something down. "Meet me at this address Friday at 1 pm exactly and I'll tell you everything."

He handed me the note. I didn't recognize the address. "Why would I meet some random stranger at a place I don't know?"

"I'm not going to force you to do anything. But if you want to learn how to make money, meet me there at 1 pm on the dot. If you show up one minute late, just don't bother showing up at all."

He walked away without another word. I looked down at the note...*Learn how to make money? What did he mean by that? Was he offering me a job? Could I trust him? Who was this guy anyway? Am I about to get myself in some kind of serious trouble?*

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My curiosity got the better of me. *Maybe he could actually teach me how to make some money? I could go and see what he's all about. And if anything felt off, I could just get out of there. Right?*

I arrived at the address 20 minutes early to make sure I wasn't late. But when I got there...*What is this place?* I double-checked the address...triple-checked!...quadruple-checked! And yes...there was no doubt - this is it.

I had checked online the night before, and saw that it was a hotel...but I didn't expect to end up surrounded by men and women dressed as if they owned the place. Why didn't he tell me to dress up a bit?

Can I just walk in? It felt so wrong. I looked around to see if anyone was staring at me...the only one in a t-shirt and jeans. That's when I saw the massive ship parked right next to the building. *It even has its own ship? What is this place?!*

I walked around to the ship and saw the port outlined by a wide and mountainous landscape. It looked like it came out of a movie set. I almost forgot why I was there. I pulled out my phone to look at the time. *Ahh! It's 12:58 already?!*

I looked back at the hotel...*I could still walk away...*I looked back down at my phone -12:59.

I took a deep breath and entered the hotel. My mind went blank. It was as if I stepped into a different world. Everything was so clean and shiny. I saw the man sitting on a couch sipping tea. Just the cup by itself looked like it cost more than a month's worth of food.

"You made it." - He said. "I saw you standing out there like 15 minutes ago. I almost thought you weren't going to come in."

I let out the most awkward nervous laughter - "I wasn't sure if I could just walk in."

He gestured to the seat in front of him - "Please sit. Would you like a cup of honey green tea?"

"Uh...no thanks. I'm fine." - There was no way that I could accept such an expensive looking drink. What if I had to pay for it at the end?

"So tell me, what got you fired?"

"Umm...well..." - He caught me off guard. I wasn't prepared for him to get straight into it.

"Don't be nervous. Here..." - He waved over to one of the hotel employees who brought over a cup. "Have some tea. It will help you to relax a little."

He poured a cup of tea and handed it to me. I couldn't refuse at this point. I took a sip of the tea to not be rude. Then I took a deep breath - "Honestly, I couldn't believe they fired me. I did everything I was supposed to. And more. But just the other day they told me I was no longer needed at my job... that it's all being automated now."

"I see...and whose fault do you think that is?"

"Their fault, of course! I did nothing wrong."

"Hmm...well, that's your first big mistake."

“What?” - Not even a minute into the conversation and he’s insulting me? “How’s that my mistake? I did my job! And they still fired me!”

“You gave up responsibility.”

“What?” - Seriously, is this guy crazy or something?

“You’re worried about how you’re going to make money, right? And now, you’re putting the blame on your employer. By blaming your employer, you’re giving up responsibility.”

“What are you talking about?”

“It’s only when you take back the responsibility and own it that you can unleash your power to change and pivot.”

I put the teacup back on the table and stood up - “I’m sorry, that sounds nice and all, but I worked hard there. I took responsibility and they still fired me. I was hoping that you were going to help me make money, but I can’t waste any more time. I need to go out and find a job.”

“I am teaching you. If you don’t want to listen to my message, then that’s up to you, but before you go...” He took my teacup and put it in front of him - “If you want to learn how to make money, I won’t be able to teach you until you let me.

“It’s like this teacup. Right now, it’s full. If I try pouring more tea into the cup...it overflows very quickly.” - He poured more and more until it overflowed. He continued to talk and continued to pour. The tea was now spilling everywhere. - “Whatever I add comes right back out.”

Then he stopped. He picked up the cup and quietly dumped the tea into the flower pot next to him. Then he turned and looked me straight in the eye - “If you empty your teacup, all the tea I pour in easily fills the cup.”

“And what is that supposed to mean?” - I asked clearly annoyed.

“It means, if you open up your mind instead of running away like you were just about to, I’ll be able to teach you how to make money.”

I turned around and started walking away. But then I froze. It was as if my mind was telling me I should leave, but my body was forcing me to stay. My legs wouldn’t listen. *Will I even be able to find another job that pays as well as my last one? And if I did find one, how long will it last?*

I turned back around and looked at the man who was still standing by the flowerpot, calmly sipping his tea. If he could *really* teach me how to make money, I could at least listen to what he said, no matter how crazy it seemed.

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